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## **Between Invisibility and Over-visibility: Self-perception and User Expectations of Liaison Interpreters in Business Settings\***

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**Abstract:** This paper aims to investigate the self-perception and user expectations of business liaison interpreters by means of a questionnaire-based survey on three groups of respondents: professional interpreters, student interpreters, and clients. Chesterman's (2001) four models of ethics, together with the hypothetical no ethics model, were embodied in the five choices to 17 closed-ended questions and five translation versions to two interpreting samples. The frequencies of responses to the questions and the evaluation scores of the translation versions were collected and analyzed, revealing the following findings: 1) all three groups agreed that business liaison interpreters go beyond the prescribed role and simultaneously shoulder the tasks of translating and coordinating; 2) all three groups acknowledged the constraints translation ethics place on the freedom of action, with the "ethics of communication" being the most widely acknowledged model; 3) there were discrepancies between and within the groups, and even attitudinal inconsistencies and contradictions in individual participants. These findings, by re-describing the interpreter's power and limits in interlingual and intercultural interactions, are supposed to shed light on the complexity of the interpreter's role and thus help improve professional standards and interpreting training.

**Keywords:** liaison interpreting; self-perception; user expectations; translation/interpreting ethics; business settings

## **Between Invisibility and Over-visibility: Self-perception and User Expectations of Liaison Interpreters in Business Settings**

Ever since cross-linguistic communication began, interpreters have been at the forefront in facilitating communication across languages and cultures. However, these significant actors have been, more often than not, conceptualized as invisible ‘non-persons’ in a neutral position between the interlocutors (Pöchhacker 2004: 147), and prescribed by laymen’s common sense as well as their own professional codes of ethics to give a complete, accurate and faithful rendition of what is said in language A in language B (Schweda-Nicholson 1994).

It was not until the mid-1970s that such a mechanistic conception was first challenged. From a sociological point of view, Anderson observed that “the interpreter’s role is always partially undefined—that is, the role prescriptions are objectively inadequate” (Anderson 1976/2002: 216). This observation worked as a point of departure for investigations of the interpreter’s role in particular socio-cultural and institutional contexts. Investigating the linguistic, socio-cultural and interactive complexity of the interpreter-mediated encounter, researchers discovered that there exists a divorce between the prescription and the reality of the interpreted communicative events (Angelelli 2004; Soriano 2015). Based on case studies and questionnaires, they provided solid evidence of the participatory (visible) role of interpreters, especially liaison interpreters in community settings (including legal and medical interpreting, as well as other ‘institutionalized’ interpreting situations such as refugee hearings, police interviews) (e.g. Angelelli 2004; Mason 2004; Pöchhacker 2000, 2004; Roy 1989, 2000; Wadensjö 1998; Berk-Seligson 2002; Gavioli and Baraldi 2011).

Our study is an extension of this approach and probes into the complex role of liaison interpreters in business settings, an area “perhaps the least covered or researched among all specific fields of interpreting” (Ozolins 2014: 30). With the aim of investigating the self-perception and user expectations of the business liaison interpreter (BLI), we involved three groups of respondents (professional interpreters, student interpreters, and clients) in our study. These over 100 respondents were

confronted with a range of selected interpreting samples and/or questions pertaining to the interpreters' power to intervene and the limits to their intervention. Their evaluations of the samples and responses to the questions were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. It is hoped these empirical data may help pinpoint the location of BLIs on the role continuum ranging from "invisible ghosts" to "over-visible arbitrators" (Gulliver 1979: 220).

## **1. Background**

As Pöchhacker (2004: 147) states, the role of the interpreter has become "one of the most prominent topics in interpreting studies". Ever since Anderson (1976/2002: 214) depicted the interpreter as "a power figure" in his groundbreaking paper, the last few decades have witnessed an unprecedented and exponential increase in publications on the complexity of the interpreter's role. The view of the interpreter as "visible" and having the power to influence the interaction has been supported by different observational studies carried out from a sociolinguistic and discourse analysis perspective (e.g. Roy 1989; Wadensjö 1998; Rosenberg 2002). Being qualitative descriptions or quantitative analyses in nature, these studies unequivocally revealed that "the interpreter is a full-fledged participant in the discourse" (Rosenberg 2002: 222), who actively intervenes, assuming a coordinating role at the same time as transmitting the message (Wadensjö 1998: 105). These theoretical reflections form the backdrop against which the present study has been carried out.

More recently, the interpreter's role and power has become the subject of various types of survey research. Most survey was conducted with the interpreters themselves. Based on hundreds of questionnaires and interviews from the US, Canada and Mexico, Angelelli (2003, 2004) concluded that interpreters perceived, enacted, and described their role as visible agents, or "essential partners, co-constructors to the interaction" (Angelelli 2008: 149). Slatyer and Chesher (2007) discovered that 65% of the interpreters perceived themselves as gatekeepers ensuring a smooth flow of communication, as well as facilitators bridging potential cultural gaps. A more localized questionnaire-based study by Martin and Martí (2008) in Spain revealed that

“the public service interpreters surveyed intervene quite liberally, adapting utterances, adding cultural explanations, and contributing information on public services” (226). An interview-based survey with professional interpreters in Sweden seemed to reveal a contradictory finding: the interpreters were found aligning with the existing guidelines regarding an interpreter’s role and ethical attitude, such as accuracy, confidentiality and impartiality (Hadziabdic and Hjelm 2016: 221).

The second stream of surveys was conducted with clients to ascertain their expectations of interpreters. Pöchhacker (2000) revealed that most of the over 600 service providers in Vienna expected the interpreter to go beyond the task of “just translating”, and to take over coordinating tasks, adapt their utterances to clients’ communicative needs and abridge circumlocutory utterances by clients. Similar studies by Kelly (2000) and Kadric (2001) in the legal sphere, interestingly, revealed contrastive findings: a majority of the legal professionals surveyed by Kelly rejected a cultural mediation role for the interpreter, yet as many as 85% of the judges surveyed by Kadric applauded it. An online survey by Drugan (2017) with social workers unraveled that the client supported “the framing of interpreters and translators as active co-participants, and indeed powerful agents” (136).

A more inclusive set of surveys was conducted with both interpreters and clients. Mesa (2000) and Ren (2010) showed that interpreters tended to show more subjectivity than their clients might expect, but on the whole, the perceptions and expectations of the interpreter’s role by both groups have evolved.

A close review indicates that an overwhelming majority of the literature exploring a more dynamic role for the interpreter was set in a liaison (or dialogue) mode rather than a conference mode<sup>1</sup>. This phenomenon echoes Hsieh’s observation that “among all forms of translation and interpretation, liaison interpreting has the most observable and apparent contexts of the dynamics of participant interactions” (2003: 303), in which liaison interpreters are “highly visible and active participants in three-way exchanges” (Mason 2004: 89). A further examination reveals that a disproportionately large slice of the literature to date has been applied in the community-interpreting areas. By contrast, very little research has been carried out on the role of the interpreter in business settings, the main reason being that this field is “heavily protected by considerations of commercial confidentiality” (Ozolins 2015: 327).

The scant literature on business liaison interpreting (Ko 1996, Gavioli and Maxwell 2007, Takimoto 2006, Dodds 2011) nevertheless makes some important contributions to unlocking “the least covered or researched” field to scrutiny and identifying its particular ethical ethos (Ozolins 2014: 30). As a pioneer in the investigation of BLIs’ role, Ko (1996) related that interpreters in business contexts may be asked to play a multiplicity of roles other than transmitting the message, and their ethical principles of impartiality and accuracy may be put under severe strain because of their economic dependence on clients, the other parties’ assumptions about their role and the environment both physical and cultural. Dodds (2011) agreed that BLIs, because of their language skills, may be asked to perform a variety of functions rather than interpreting, depending on degree of experience of participants working with interpreters. These essentially suppositional descriptions of BLI’s role find a valuable empirical complement in the research of Gavioli and Maxwell (2007) and Takimoto (2006). Resorting to conversation analysis of naturally occurring interpreter-mediated business talks, Gavioli and Maxwell (2007) found evidence to support interpreters’ coordinative behaviours, which echoed Wadensjö’s (1998) argument of the interpreters’ dual role. They also found that business interpreters’ purpose of promoting business interactions fundamentally drives their behaviour. In Takimoto (2006), seven NAATI-accredited professional interpreters interviewed indicated that they value and respect the existence of the professional codes of ethics, yet insisted that flexible interpretation and application are necessary for success in business settings. From these semi-structured interviews, Takimoto observed that BLIs’ roles are often expanded, and they seem to be greatly dependent on the expectations of clients (2006: 56). Meanwhile, compared with its counterparts in the community settings, it adopted a more comprehensive perspective, i.e., while challenging the stereotype of interpreters being “invisible ghosts”, Takimoto equally didn’t wish to push them to the opposite end of “over-visible arbitrators”, and thus included the constraints of professional ethics into consideration. This viewpoint was later echoed by Maritin and Martí (2008) in their observation that in a highly complex process as business liaison interpreting, “the socio-communicative, contextual,

pragmatic and functional characteristics that make up this complexity often affect the interpreters' role, generating tensions that may lead to ethical conflicts, which in turn make it difficult to take decisions about the limits to which the interpreter can legitimately intervene" (205).

Intrigued by this more-balanced view of the BLI's role, and more by its application to interpreting pedagogy, we designed and conducted a survey-based study involving a more elaborate design in China. In our conviction that the interpreter's power and limits are concurrently present, with one not excluding the other, we consulted some current codes of ethics for interpreting and translation for guidance to be applied in the survey.

## **2. Code of ethics for interpreting and translation**

Interpreters perform challenging work in sensitive business domains, yet they rarely have access to helpful guidance when they face ethical challenges. We discovered to our dismay the lack of sector-specific codes, business interpreting in particular, which obviously is "not having spawned codes of interpreting ethics" (Ozolins 2014: 30). Then we decided to resort to the ethical codes for general interpreting and consulted "Code of professional ethics" listed by AIIC<sup>2</sup>, which however, gave virtually no details on role or practice, and confined ethical principles to confidentiality and maintaining the dignity of the profession (Pöchhacker 2004; Bancroft 2005; Ozolins 2015). At the other end of the spectrum is the many codes with a very similar deontological nature, such as the code of ethics for the Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators, and the Irish Translators' and Interpreters' Association. According to some international surveys by Schweda-Nicholson (1994), Bancroft (2005) and Hale (2007), there was near-universal consensus on three ethical principles: confidentiality, accuracy and impartiality, thus self-evidently mirroring a "machine" model and discouraging the practitioners from taking up the role of mediation. Even if some codes<sup>3</sup> did incorporate issues of intervention and advocacy, they regularly contradicted one another (Drugan 2011:116), or were simply "too stark to tell interpreters how to negotiate the many varied and complex real-life situations which



they encounter” (Tate and Turner 1997/2002: 375), and in brief, “cannot be of much use without proper reflection and explanations of the very difficult concepts it presents in concise, and often simplistic ways, due to the very nature of a code” (Hale 2008: 100).

We eventually relied upon literature from general translation studies, which also witnesses a heated debate on ethical issues initiated by Pym (2001), and felt justified in appropriating concepts from translation ethics for our study, as “interpreting is a hyponym of translation in the wider, generic sense... (thus), the basic characterization of translation as linguistic/cultural or interlingual/intercultural mediation automatically applies to interpreting” (Pöchhacker 2008: 12).

The multiplicity of ideas about translation ethics were crystallized by Chesterman (2001) into four basic models: “ethics of representation”, which encourages the translator/interpreter to represent the source text accurately, without adding, omitting or changing anything; “ethics of service”, which regards translation as a commercial service and requires an ethical translator to comply with the client’s instructions and fulfill the aim of the translation as set by the client; “ethics of communication”, which views an ethical translator as a mediator working to further intercultural cooperation between parties who are “Other” to each other; and “norm-based ethics”, which attaches overriding importance to norms, namely, expectations in the target culture in a particular period, or in this case, “internalized behavioural constraints which govern interpreters’ choices in relation to the different contexts where they are called upon to operate” (Garzone 2002: 110). These models, because of their diversity in contrast to the prominent mechanistic role model advocated (explicitly or implicitly) by codes of ethics for interpreting, were applied to this study as theoretical foundation in analysis of interpreter ethics.

In sum, our study attempts to pinpoint the location of BLIs on Gulliver’s (1979: 220) role continuum after taking into consideration their power to intervene and the limits to their intervention, to ensure they would be well-situated to seek “a balance between freedom of action and situational constraints” (Chesterman 1997: 192). It aims to address the following three questions:

1. Is the interpreter still perceived to be invisible or is he/she now empowered with more freedom to intervene?

2. If the respondents at the same time acknowledge the constraints translation ethics imposes on the interpreter's freedom of action, which model of ethics best fits the perceptions and expectations of both interpreters and clients?

3. Are there differences in the perceptions of the interpreter's role by the different groups, or even within the same group?

### 3. Research design

#### 3.1 Questionnaire

Two questionnaires were designed specific to professional interpreters, student interpreters and clients. The one aimed at professional and student interpreters was composed of three parts: personal information (Part 1), closed-ended questions (Part 2), and interpreting samples (Part 3).

Part 1 includes information about age, gender, education, professional training and/or practical experience; while Part 2 includes 17 single-choice, closed-ended questions (with reference to Angelelli 2004 and Ren 2010), which can be further grouped into three categories based on their different foci (See Table 1).

Table 1. The classification of closed-ended questions with examples

<i>Category</i>	<i>Question No.</i>	<i>Example</i>
C1: the BLI's qualifications, attitudes and functions	Q1, Q3, Q4, Q5, Q17	Q1: Which of the following descriptors best portrays the overall role of BLI?  Q3: What do you think is the interpreter's main function in the process of business liaison interpreting?
C2: expectations of the BLI's performance in normal practice	Q2, Q6, Q10, Q16	Q2: Do you take the initiative to contact both sides after you take an interpreting commission?  Q6: What personal pronouns do you usually use in your interpretation?
C3: expectations of the BLI's performance when conflicts of interest occur	Q7, Q8, Q9, Q11, Q12, Q13, Q14, Q15	Q7: What do you do if there is an awkward silence during a communication event?  Q12: If one side uses swear words and asks you to faithfully convey these, would you do so?

Under each question, there were five choices listed in random order, one embodying absolute "freedom of action", or "unconstraint by translation ethics", and the other four respectively mirroring Chesterman's (2001) four models of ethics (See Table 2

for examples). The respondents were asked to make choices based on their own understanding of an interpreter's role.

Table 2. Answers to Q11 and Q14 with corresponding ethics

Q11: During the process of interpreting, would you take the initiative to explain the cultural differences if you foresee some potential cultural conflicts?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Generally no, interpreting is nothing but a cross-language task. ("ethics of representation")</li> <li>2. Generally yes. Cross-cultural communication is part of an interpreting task. ("ethics of communication")</li> <li>3. Yes if it's in the interest of my employer; if it's in the interest of the other party, I would give the explanation only under his/her request. ("ethics of service")</li> <li>4. Of course I would. It's a great opportunity to show my skills and advantages. ("unconstraint from translation ethics")</li> <li>5. Yes. I would deliver a faithful translation before adding some explanations. ("norm-based ethics")</li> </ol>
Q14: Would you make intervention if the conversation falls into a deadlock or is on the verge of breaking down?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Of course! I would actively take the role of coordinator, and make all the arrangement which I think necessary. ("unconstraint from translation ethics")</li> <li>2. No, I cannot cross the boundary. So I would wait until they figure out the dispute by themselves. ("ethics of representation")</li> <li>3. Would try to bring a pause to the deadlock by suggesting a tea break for instance, so that the parties would have time to calm themselves down. ("ethics of communication")</li> <li>4. Would make some intervention from the interest of my employer. ("ethics of service")</li> <li>5. Would decide whether to intervene or not according to the applicable social customs and rules. ("norm-based ethics")</li> </ol>

Part 3 includes two interpreting samples (adapted from Xiao and Yang 2006) in which the interpreter was occasionally confronted with potential conflicts of interest between the main interlocutors. Under each scenario, there were five interpreting versions designed in the same manner as the choices in Part 2, indicating a range of intervention levels by the BLI. The respondents were asked to score each of the versions and summarize the reasons for each mark.

The questionnaire for clients includes only Part 1 and Part 2. In addition to basic personal information, the clients were additionally asked about their work place and experience of dealing with BLIs. The content of the questionnaire in Part 2 was the same as the one for interpreters, except that it was worded from a clients' perspective.

Before the questionnaires reached their final forms, they underwent revision and modification based on expert feedback, a dry run and a pilot (See Angelelli 2004). Initially, there were 22 questions in Part 2; however, after consultations with four

experts (two in bilingual communication and two from a survey company), five questions were removed due to redundancy or lack of clarity. The survey in its revised draft form was then administered to four professional interpreters in the dry run phase. Each of the respondents was asked to review the documents separately with us and identify items they considered to be problematic. They were also asked about issues of readability, wording and use of jargon. Their feedback was incorporated in the next draft of the questionnaire, which was then used in the pilot study. Unlike the dry run, the pilot was not administered in face-to-face mode; instead, the final drafts were sent out to six respondents (two from each group) via email as the formal survey would be. Their responses were collected and opinions consulted over the next two to three days. Based on the respondents' feedback, we made further adjustments to the closed-ended questions and interpreting samples. All the above efforts were made to establish both content validity and external validity (Fishman *et al.* 2003).

### **3.2 Respondents**

The survey involved three groups of respondents: professional interpreters, student interpreters and clients. We approached professional and student interpreters in two most highly-academic and influential events in China's interpreting business. The group of clients was approached in a China Import and Export Fair in Guangzhou. We worked with the contact lists of the attendees and sent out emails during the Conference, the Contest and the Fair with questionnaires attached in batches and asked the addressees to complete them at their own pace within two months.

We sent out altogether 200 questionnaires (50 for professionals, 50 for students, and 100 for clients) and collected 119 responses (37 from professionals, 43 from students, and 39 from clients, with the respective response rate of 74%, 86% and 39%), among which the first received 90 valid samplings (30 for each group) were applied for further comparative analysis.

As revealed by their answers to Part 1 of the questionnaire, the 30 Professionals (5 male, 25 female) were aged from 26 to 45, with three to ten years' of professional interpreting experience, working with enterprises, universities, translation companies or local governments. The duration of respondents' specialist interpreting education ranged from none (26.7%) to over two years (16.7%), with the majority having been trained for a half to two years. The age range of the Clients (20 male, 10 female) was 35 to 45 years, with an average of five to six years of dealing with BLIs. They were

managers or coordinators in charge of employing interpreters in foreign-oriented companies and institutions. The average age of the Students was 23 (3 male, 27 female). All of them were English major students in Chinese universities, having had interpreting training for over one year, but none of them had professional interpreting experience.

#### **4. Data collection and analysis**

The data were presented and analyzed in two steps. The first step involved a comparative study of the respondents' self-perceptions or user expectations of the role of the BLI, by reviewing all three groups' responses to the 17 questions in Part 2 of the questionnaire. The second step involved a comparative study of the results of the assessment in Part 3 comparing the professional and student interpreters, with the aim of testing the consistency of their choices and seeing whether practical experience leads to significant differences in interpreters' perceptions of their role.

##### **4.1 The responses to the closed-ended questions**

All respondents were asked to answer the 17 closed-ended questions in Part 2. The five choices for each question were deliberately arranged in random order in the questionnaire; however, with the aim of facilitating data analysis, we designated "unconstraint by translation ethics" as A1, "ethics of representation" A2, "ethics of service" A3, "ethics of communication" A4 and "norm-based ethics" A5. As shown in Table 1 (see section 3.1), the 17 questions fall into three categories in their different foci, thus we tapped into both the overall results and the classified ones, based on which within- and between-group comparisons are conducted.

##### *4.1.1 Overall and classified results of the answers to the closed-ended questions*

**Table 3.** The frequencies and percentages of the five choices to all questions by the three groups

	A1 (Unconstraint)	A2 (Representation)	A3 (Service)	A4 (Communication)	A5 (Norm-based)
Professionals (%)	20 (3.92)	103 (20.20)	45 (8.82)	206 (40.39)	136 (26.67)
Clients (%)	9 (1.76)	99 (19.41)	94 (18.43)	204 (40.00)	104 (20.39)
Students (%)	8 (1.57)	50 (9.80)	53 (10.39)	271 (53.14)	128 (25.10)

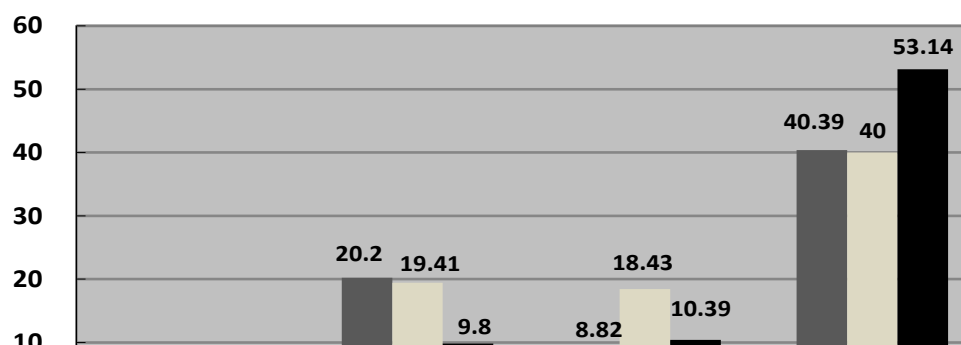


Figure 1. The percentages of each choice given by the three groups (%)

Table 3 and Figure 1 present the frequencies and percentages of each answer to the 17 questions by all groups. It is clear that the rankings by the three groups are almost unanimous: the “communication” model enjoys a commanding lead ( $\geq 40\%$ ), followed by the “norm-based”, “representation”, and “service” (the only exception being the sequence of “representation” and “service” by the Students, the former lagging slightly behind the latter). The “unconstraint” ethics model is the least favored ( $<4\%$ ), far behind the other ethics models.

The huge gap between the A4 and A1 choices is rather revealing: 1. While empowering the BLI with the freedom to intervene if necessary, all three groups acknowledge the constraints translation ethics imposes on freedom of action. An arbitrary interpreter who oversteps the boundary is applauded neither by her clients nor her colleagues. 2. Of the four governing translation ethics, “ethics of communication” best accords with the perceptions and expectations of all groups. The BLI is centrally employed in the work of mediating the successful achievement of conversational or interactional goals.

We further classified the data into three streams in consonance with the above-mentioned three types of question. The first stream relates to the answers to C1 questions, featuring the BLI’s qualifications, attitudes and functions.

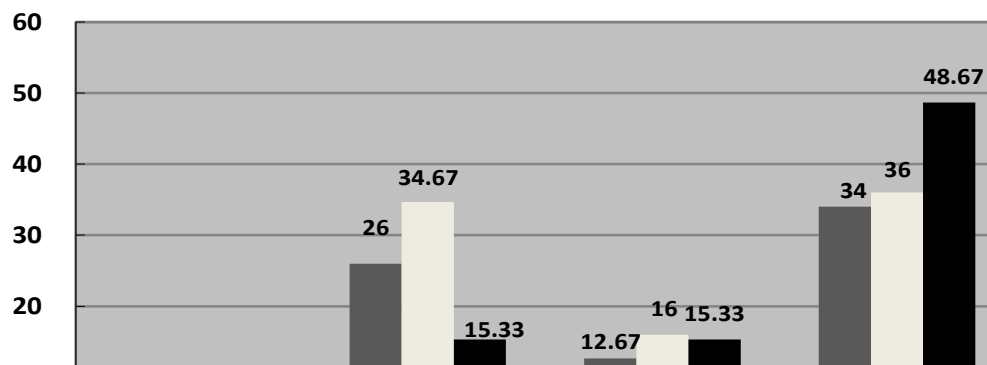


Figure 2. The percentages of each choice of C1 questions given by the three groups (%)

The second stream involves the answers to C2 questions, investigating respondents' expectations of the BLI's performance in common practices, such as prior preparation, approaches towards cultural elements, and communications with clients during breaks.

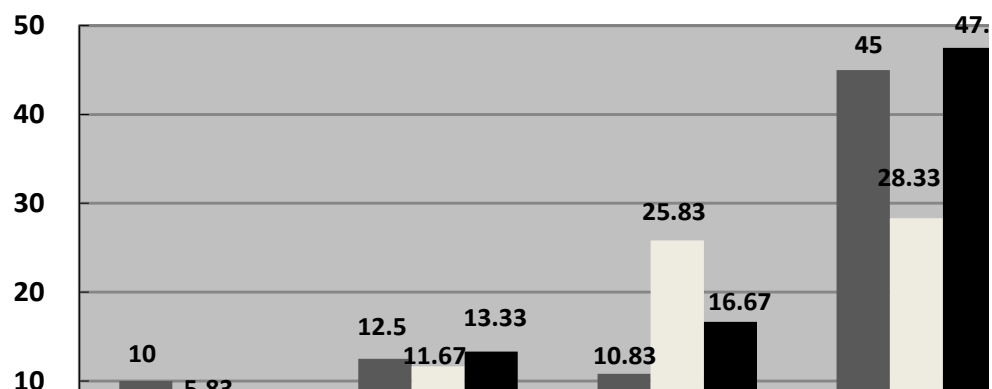


Figure 3. The percentages of each choice of C2 questions by the three groups (%)

C3 questions simulate potential interpreting tasks beyond the interpreter's strict relaying function, such as overlapping talks, awkward silences, aggressive behaviour, lengthy monologues, interruptions, or even accusations of misinterpretation. The purpose is to investigate expectations of the BLI's performance in crises where conflicts of interest arise.

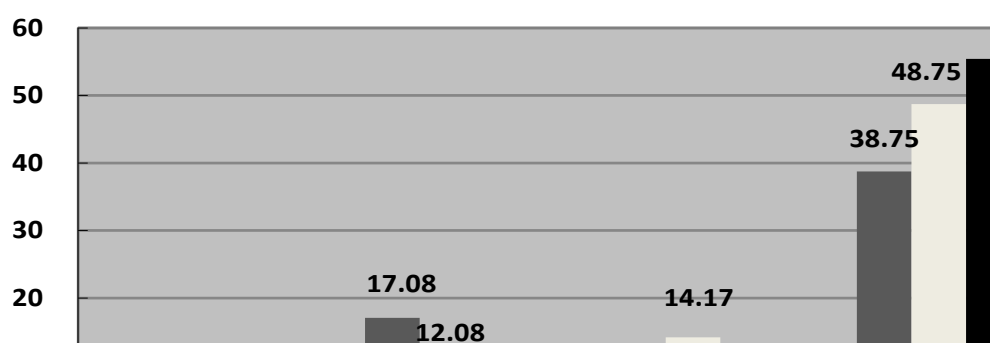


Figure 4. The percentages of each choice of C3 questions by the three groups (%)

#### 4.1.2 Within- and between-group comparisons

Based on the overall results (Figure 1) and the classified ones (Figure 2, 3, and 4), we conducted both within- and between-group comparisons, the former based on a vertical comparison of the data for each group in all four categories, the latter on a horizontal comparison of the main features exhibited by the three groups. Since the respondents' preferences for the communication ethics model as against the unconstrained one are crystal clear from the overall results, in this section we mainly focus on the other three models located somewhere "on a continuum between that of a mere medium of transmission and that of a true third party" (Knapp-Potthoff and Knapp 1986: 153). Our within-group observations are as follows:

1. The sequences of the five choices made by professional interpreters are by and large consistent: A4 (communication) heading the list, A5 (norm-based), A2 (representation), A3 (service) following and A1 (unconstraint) trailing behind. Among the middle three choices, A5 gains wider approval than A2 and A3, and its higher placing (especially in C3 questions concerning crisis management efforts) confirms that professional interpreters expect to behave in predictable, norm-conforming ways in their mediation of communicative events. Overall, the prominence of A5 (just next to A4) in our research echoes Angelelli's argument that, "although interpreters are individuals who possess the capability of facilitating cross-linguistic/cultural communication, they are also social human beings" (2004: 84). As Clifford (2004: 111) argues, the ethical principles we present to interpreters must reflect this reality



that their role is inherently a social one. In such a social role, the interpreter is obliged to take the expectations of the other social actors into account. A closer study of A5 reveals an interesting fact: in C1 questions, the frequency of A5 is almost on a par with A2 (26% each); however, in C2 and C3 questions, A5 is significantly preferred to A2 (by around 10 percentage points). We attribute this gap to the conflict experienced interpreters face: they are torn between the prescriptive standard of literalism and the inner demand to mediate the activity as a social person. A considerable number of them might wish to depict themselves as faithful and neutral, yet in actual performance, consciously or unconsciously, they abandon the ghost role and give themselves license to coordinate the dynamics of the interaction.

2. Consistency in the sequence of choices is not displayed by the client group, especially in their choices of A2, A3 and A5. The lack of a clear pattern of differentiation may very well support Pöchhacker's observation that interpreting users hardly give any real thought to the role of the interpreter (2000: 53), or at least, they hardly share any common knowledge of a BLI's role and task. For example, the "representation" model (A2) ranks second place in C1 questions (34.67%); however, it drops dramatically to fourth place (at 11.67% and 12.08%) in C2 and C3 questions. This inconsistent attitude, in our view, reflects the fact that the clients, just like the interpreters, are suffering from an inner conflict between the stereotypical understanding of the interpreter as a faithful echo and the on-spot expectation of mediational intervention. In real world practice, especially when their interests conflict with those of the other side, the clients allow and even encourage the interpreter to step out of the "ghost" role and act as a visible agent to effectively facilitate understanding and smooth over any communication obstacles. The high percentage of A4 (communication model) in C3 questions is the justification from the opposite side. In all, it can be safely concluded that, from the perspective of the clients, the "representation" model has its place, as "it is appropriate for those circumstances where fidelity must be the guiding principle"; however, the model has significant limitations as it misrepresents business liaison interpreting as a simple task, "masking what it is in actuality a complex activity" (Clifford 2004: 110).

3. Student interpreters display the most consistent attitudes in their choices of all types of questions, with no obvious fluctuations across the first three figures. Figure 4, however, exhibits some slight, yet very revealing, differences from the others. In C3 (crisis management) situations, students' choices are predominantly focused on A4 and A5 (the percentages being 55.42% and 33.33% respectively) while the other three answers total a meager 11.25%. The polarization of the choices is seen as a strong indicator that student interpreters tend to adopt a more visible approach and are willing to shoulder the task of "coordinating" when conflicts of interest occur between the main interlocutors. In their eyes, the interpreter is "an individual who orchestrates language, culture and social factors in a communicative event" (Angelelli 2004: 24). Their dominant preference for the "communication" model (between 47.5% and 55.42% across the four figures) reflects the success of interpreting pedagogy in higher education, which endows them with an understanding that a professional interpreter is the only conversational participant with the ability to follow both sides of the cross-linguistic discourse, and thus "uniquely positioned within these discourses, to control the flow of information necessary for the achievement of the respondents' communication goals" (Pöchhacker 2004: 57).

The between-group comparison indicates a unanimous preference for A4 and A5 by all respondents, a strong indicator that the interpreter's role is being re-construed and his/her autonomy re-defined. The interpreter is throwing away the shackles imposed by the prescriptive conduit model, and slowly transforming herself into one who undertakes the norm-conforming social role of "facilitator", "mediator" and "co-constructor to the interaction". However, due to their different statuses, experiences and backgrounds, each group has its own preferences when making choices, underlying the different expectations of the BLI each has:

1. The choices of the Professionals exhibit a rather clear pattern of differentiation, with discernible differences between each model of ethics. The ladder-like distribution of choices indicates that the experienced interpreters share a clear-cut positioning of the various models of ethics. Also, their approval of A3 (the service model) is the lowest compared with the other two groups. In C3 questions, the choice

of this model accounts for only 5.43%, indicating that professional interpreters do not perceive themselves as passive servants of their clients, but rather independent agents in communication events.

2. The sequence of the choices by the Clients is the same as that of the professionals; however, the A2, A3, and A5 percentages are very close to each another. Apart from the rather scattered pattern of choices, there are always fluctuations between the different types of questions. In sum, this group's expectations of the BLI's role seem to vary widely from person to person, and from situation to situation. Despite all the fluctuations, however, the clients' choice of A3 (the service model) occupies a middle position across the four figures (ranging from 14.17% to 25.83%), and, not surprisingly, is higher than that of the other two groups. This gap is deemed reasonable considering that they are the only group viewing the process from the perspective of users of the interpreting service.

3. Overall, the Students exhibit the highest degree of autonomy in that they rate the ethics of "communication" much higher in percentage terms than the other two groups, while ethics of "representation" is much lower. At the same time, their choices are more uniform across the different types of question, a fact that can be attributed to the consistent in-class training and to a general lack of real world practice.

In conclusion, our observations in this section echo those of Mesa (2000) and Ren (2010) that the self-perception and user expectations of an interpreter's role have both evolved from the traditional prescription portraying the interpreter as an "invisible ghost". All three groups of respondents acknowledged that the interpreter is positioned somewhere on the continuum between invisibility and over-visibility and the best guiding ethic in pinpointing the ideal position is that of communication. Despite the general consensus, each group displayed its own features in the answers to our questionnaires: the professionals with the clearest pattern of differentiation, the clients with the most scattered pattern of choices, and the students with the highest level of autonomy. These differences highlight the complexities underlying the role of the BLI and encourage further studies in this field.

## 4.2 The interpreting sample evaluation

The second step of our research involved only the professional and student interpreters. In Part 3 of the questionnaire, both groups were confronted with two interpreter-mediated scenarios, the first being a business negotiation, in which both the main interlocutors wished to maximize their own profits while aiming to close a business deal; the second being an informal talk after the deal was closed, in which the Chinese host insisted on presenting a gift to the English client. Designed according to same pattern as Part 2, there were five versions to each of the interpreting samples, including “unconstraint from translation ethics” (V1), “ethics of representation” (V2), “ethics of service” (V3), “ethics of communication” (V4) and “norm-based ethics” (V5). Respondents were asked to score each of the five translation versions of the two interpreting samples and account for their scoring.

In this section, the respondents’ scores are quantitatively presented and the reasons for scoring qualitatively analyzed. The aims are twofold: firstly to verify whether their perceptions of the BLI’s role are consistent across different investigation modes, and secondly to observe whether practical experience potentially leads to significant differences in interpreters’ perceptions of their own role.

We present the examples and explanations of the correspondences between ethics and the interpreted versions in Table 4, and the evaluation results in Figure 5.

Table 4. Examples and explanations of the embodiment of translation ethics in the interpreted versions

	<i>Ethics</i>	<i>Examples</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
V1	unconstraint	I: (to the client) 我刚才告诉她你们的折扣标准了。(wǒ gāngcái gàosù tā nǐmēn de zhékòu biāozhǔn le/ I just told her your discount levels.)	The interpreter uses the third person, addresses the interlocutors directly and conveys confidential information without asking for permission beforehand.
V2	representation	C: 不包括。我得留点讨价还价的空间。(bù bāokuò. Wǒ děi liúdiǎn tǎojiàhuánjià de kōngjiān / Not included. I need to leave some wiggle room for bargaining.)  I: No. I need to leave some wiggle room for bargaining.	The interpreter uses the first person, works like a translation machine, produces a faithful representation of what is said by the interlocutors, and even copies their facial expressions and gestures.

V3	service	<p>C: We might be interested in fifteen (thousand)... depending on the discount you can offer.</p> <p>I: 她说可能会要一万五千件, 看我们能提供什么样的折扣。(tā shuō kěnéng huì yào yīwàn wǔqiān jiàn, kàn wǒmén néng tígòng shěnmeyàng de zhékòu/ She said she might want fifteen thousand units, depending on the discount we can offer.)</p>	The interpreter regards herself as a paid employee of the Chinese client and refers to the English-speaking party as the “other”. Thus, her interpretation of the Chinese utterances is usually more detailed. When she interprets English into Chinese, she occasionally simplifies, explains, or voices her own comments or suggestions to the Chinese client.
V4	communication	<p>C: 不包括。我得留点讨价还价的空间。(bù bāokuò. Wǒ děi liúdiǎn tǎojiàhuánjià de kōngjiān/ Not included. I need to leave some wiggle room for bargaining.)</p> <p>I: Sorry, delivery not included. You see, we don’t have much profit left at this price.</p>	The interpreter occasionally paraphrases, explains or simplifies in order to achieve the communicative effect desired by the speaker; if necessary, she even makes some adjustments to save the interlocutors’ face or to smooth over cultural differences.
V5	norm-based	<p>C: 这老外, 鬼精鬼精的。好吧。(zhè lǎowài, guǐjīngguǐjīng de. Hǎoba/ The foreigner is so cunning. OK!)</p> <p>I: Ok, you’re really cunning. Well, I don’t think cunning is a bad word here.</p>	The interpreter abides by professional norms as well as social etiquette norms. For instance, she translates the utterances and then makes compensatory remarks or explanations if necessary.

Note: “I” stands for the interpreter, “C” for the Chinese client. Transliteration and glosses for Chinese expressions were provided within brackets by the authors.

We compared the average scores for V1-V5 rated by the Professionals and the Students with CI 95% Error Bar (as shown in Figure 5), and then conducted multiple comparisons on the scores by means of Post-hoc tests (as shown in Table 5).

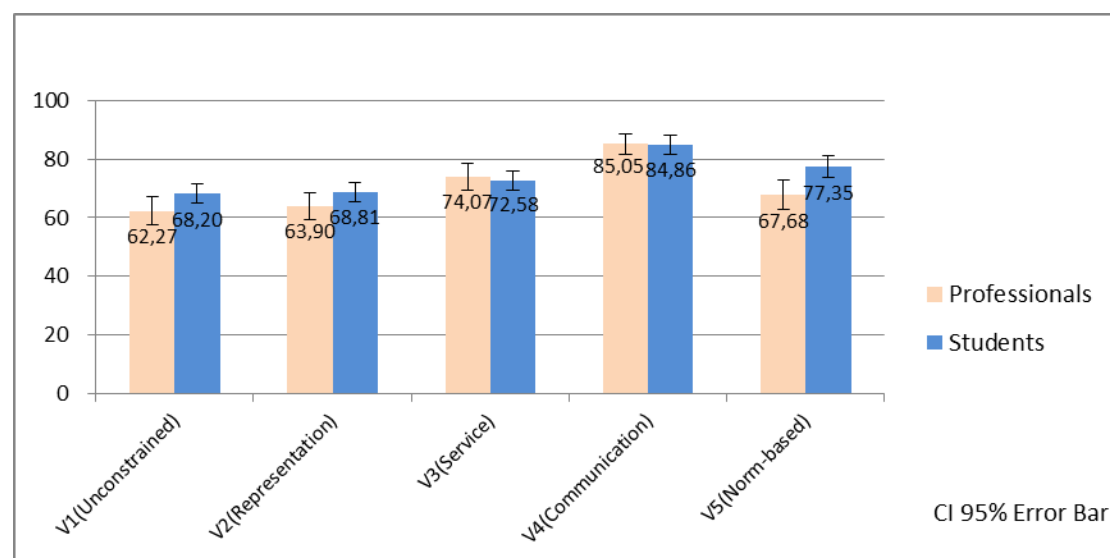


Figure 5. Average scores for V1-V5 rated by the Professionals and the Students with CI 95% Error Bar

Table 5. p-values (one-tail) of Post-hoc tests for V1-V5 rated by the Professionals and the Students

	Professionals					Students				
	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5
V1	-	0.19	0*	0*	0.01*	-	0.36	0.01*	0*	0*
V2		-	0*	0*	0.02*		-	0.01*	0*	0*
V3			-	0*	0.01*			-	0*	0.01*
V4				-	0*				-	0*

\*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

As can be seen in Figure 5 and Table 5, not only is V4 given the highest score with a predominant advantage over the other four versions, but also it shows a statistically significant extent from all the other versions. Therefore, we feel it fair to draw the conclusion that “ethics of communication” best exemplifies the perceptions of the BLI’s role by both the practitioners and trainees of interpreting. In contrast, V1 doesn’t register as much recognition as its rivals. It is assessed as the worst translation version by both groups (the lowest score as shown in Table 5 with statistically significant difference from V3, V4 and V5 as shown in Figure 5). These observations are in line with our findings in the closed-ended survey: both groups share a strong preference for “ethics of communication” and disapproval of the “unconstraint by translation ethics” position.

The ethics of representation (V2), however, exhibits much lower approval rates than in the previous survey, where it is located in the middle position among the five models. Though slightly higher than V1, the average score for V2 lags way behind the other three versions, with the p-values indicating statistically significant differences.

To explore the potential reasons for this difference, we adopt a qualitative analysis by exploring the repository of marking rationales given by the professionals and the students. Table 6 gives a selection of representative comments from Sample 1 (the first interpreter-mediated scenario).

Table 6. Selective rationales for the evaluations of Sample 1 given by the Professionals and the Students

	<i>Rationales given by the Professionals</i>	<i>Rationales given by the Students</i>
V1	“rudely interfering in the interlocutors’ business, and severely violating interpreter ethics”; “seriously compromising the interpreter’s accountability”; “blemishing the interpreter’s professional image”	“being presumptuous”, “completely self-centered”; “adding too many comments and remarks”; “making abrupt and complete changes in the previously-offered information”

V2	“not skillful enough to omit those impolite and even offensive remarks”; “potentially leading to a breakdown in negotiations”; “failing to bridge cross-cultural communication differences”	“being too straight forward”; “not flexible ”; “not polite and diplomatic enough”
V3	“very considerate of the Chinese client”; “timely communication with the Chinese client so as to avoid misunderstanding ”; “The use of the third person distancing himself from the English-speaking party”	“being a useful assistant”; “having a bias towards the Chinese party, not neutral enough”; “the interpretation of the Chinese utterances is occasionally too simplified and rigid”
V4	“being a successful coordinator, helping manage the flow of communication”; “adopting polite strategies to maintain face, and building up a friendly atmosphere”; “succeeding in achieving communication goals”	“making appropriate adjustments to the original utterances”; “the interpretation is appropriate”; “being euphemistic”
V5	“being faithful yet tactfully avoiding the potential face loss”; “failing to convey the implied meaning of the Chinese utterances”; “unnecessarily translating the word ‘cunning’; the compensatory remarks are not able to erase the negative implication of this word”	“being tactful”; “being witty and polite”; “being a bit too wordy”

As can be seen from Table 6, the two groups share some common views concerning the range of strengths of intervention by the interpreter:

1. Over half of the respondents disapprove of the invisible role adopted by the interpreter of V2, when confronted by a face-threatening utterance that conflicts with cultural conventions. Her faithful “representation” of the inappropriate utterances by one side (for instance, “wiggle room for bargaining”, “cunning foreigner”) is in violation of the conversational principles of cooperativeness and politeness, potentially risking the loss of face, and leading to a hiatus in the conversation or even a breakdown in negotiations.

2. The respondents’ attitudes towards V4 and V1 are unequivocal and consistent. The interpreter of V4 wins plaudits from a substantial majority of these two groups for stepping out of the prescribed role as a translating machine and acting as a more visible communication facilitator by gatekeeping and adjusting the exchanged information. By contrast, the interpreter of V1 is deemed as an arbitrary intruder; her behavior is neither professional nor ethical. Two professional respondents give a score of zero, accusing the interpreter of “going beyond the bounds”, concerned that the actions she arbitrarily takes may lead to unforeseen consequences.

3. Both groups hold conflicting view on V3 and V5, but, on the whole, the Professionals express more criticism V5 and more praises of V3, while the Students are more in favor of V5. This evaluation by the Professionals, however, contradicts the closed-ended survey findings, where A5 (norm-based ethics) is accepted as the second best answer, immediately after A4. This discrepancy may reveal some

attitudinal inconsistencies within the professional interpreters, thus further reflecting the complexities of the role of BLI.

In all, our observations in this section basically echo the findings in section 3.1. Based on the evaluations and rationales by the groups of Professionals and Students, the interpreter is by no means “the main party determining the terms or outcomes of the negotiation” (Pym 2012: 150). Instead, she enjoys “constrained autonomy”. Among the four models of constraining ethics, the ethics of communication is the most favored, as evidenced by the V4 score eclipsing the other versions. This observation echoes Davison’s (2000: 380) argument that “the interpreters interpret because there is some communicative or social goal that needs to be met... From this point of view, the measure of the interpreter’s success may not be another abstract count of how ‘accurate’ they are, but rather the degree to which he allows, through his actions, the speakers first to negotiate and then to achieve their goals for the speech event in question”. Meanwhile, a comparison of the results in sections 3.1 and 3.2 reveals certain inconsistencies in the respondents’ attitudes, the most noticeable being that the “ethics of representation” receives much lower support in section 3.2. When confronted by the interpreter-mediated encounters, both professional and student groups criticize the interpreter of V2 for being an “invisible ghost” and not undertaking their proper coordinating role. The consensus is reached that the interpreter’s position is located somewhere on the spectrum between “rigid” and “flexible”, that is, between invisible and over-visible.

## **5. Conclusion**

### **5.1 The consensus reached by all respondents**

Firstly, as revealed by the two main parts of the questionnaire, all three groups approve of the BLI’s autonomy, but equally stress the ethical constraints on that autonomy. The interpreter’s “over-visible” role in violation of translation ethics turns out to be the least favoured choice. Our survey offers evidence for the argument that the latitude and power exercised by BLIs in carrying out their coordinating function is subject to high-order constraints at the interactional and socio-professional levels. As suggested by Pym, a BLI is an intermediary with a certain control and responsibility, her position being “similar to that of United Nations ‘diplomatic envoys’, sent to structure and guide exchanges but not empowered to act as the principles of those exchanges” (Pym 2012: 50).



Secondly, in pinpointing the interpreter's position on the continuum between "invisibility" and "over-visibility", the respondents generally applaud the ethics of "communication". Not only do a great majority of them expect this model of ethics to guide the interpreter's translating and coordinating strategies in practice, but they also tend to interweave it into the overall description of the interpreter's qualifications, attitudes and functions. The wide acceptance of samples and answers embodying the "ethics of communication" supports Pöchhacker's (2001:413) perspective that it "foregrounds the '(inter)activity' of interpreting rather than its nature as a 'text-processing task'" and the ensuing conclusion that "the quality of interpreting essentially means 'successful communication' among the interacting parties in a particular context of interaction".

Lastly, despite their common acknowledgement of the interpreter's power to intervene and the limits of that power, there are differences among and within the groups, and even attitudinal inconsistencies and contradictions within individual participants. These collective or personal contradictions are actually the side effect of the reconstruction of the interpreter's role, validating the fact that perception of the interpreter's role is experiencing a gradual evolution following the 'invisible interpreter' era.

## **5.2 The differences between the three groups**

Initially, the professional interpreters' choices or evaluations exhibit the most ladder-like pattern, with discernible differences between each model of ethics. However, the sequences of the "service", "representation" and "norm-based" ethics are by no means consistent in these two studies: the ethics of "service" which is clearly unsupported in the Part 2 question survey gains much more acceptance in the Part 3 grading assessment; by contrast, the "norm-based" ethics which are quite popular in Part 2 become the target of criticism in Part 3. This contradictory attitude may very well imply a gap between theory and practice in the field of interpreting, and thus highlight the importance of more contextualized interpreting training.

Secondly, the clients are more diverse in their perceptions of the role of the BLI. They are basically united in acknowledging the autonomy of the interpreter, and interestingly, show their concern over the interpreter's abuse of discourse power at the same time; however, their ranking of the other three models, namely, "norm-based", "representation" and "service" is not ladder-like. Unlike the other two groups, the

clients are more utilitarian from their perspective as users of the service; hence, their expectations of the interpreter's strategies and functions are from time to time tailored to their desired communication goals.

Finally, the student interpreters are the most homogeneous group, their choices being the most consistent. Their preference for the "communication" model and objections to the "representation" model are the most obvious among the three groups. The majority of this group interpret "loyalty" as the dynamic connotation of "being loyal to the ultimate communicative goals" instead of the static one of "being loyal to the original utterances". It is fair to conclude that the developing interpreting pedagogy is equipping trainees with a more market-driven, communication-oriented view of interpreting.

### **5.3 Pedagogical applications and future research**

Traditionally, liaison interpreting training was deemed as unnecessary, since the interpreting skills required for liaison interpreters could be effectively practiced in the consecutive or simultaneous modes. However, as our survey reveals, the skills of liaison interpreters have more to do with the dynamics of communicative interaction than with 'text processing' as such. Hence the teaching methods developed for consecutive and simultaneous interpreting apply only to a limited extent.

A more specific and unique didactic focus should be the management of interactive discourse by the interpreter, giving full play to her autonomy yet under the constraints of translation ethics. As a first step, the interpreters' awareness of their role as powerful co-participants needs to be enhanced. From our observations of the students group, it seems fair to infer that the newer trends in interpreting research are exerting a positive effect on the trainees in that they are starting to give a broader license for the interpreter to act. Trainees need to be encouraged to deconstruct the conduit role and envisage themselves as playing an active participatory role in the communication. Secondly, as shown in the section of "Background", the dominant, mechanistic Code-model does not accord fully with the interpreter's self-perception and users' expectation. While the fuller reworking of the codes, the sector-specific ones in particular (we share our opinion with Shlesinger 1989, Gentile 2012, and Kalina 2015, that different settings require different norms and ethical principles), may consume a very long time, it is always feasible for the interpreting trainers to reform the non-contextual, rule-based approach to ethics and guide the trainees into

ethically engaged choices. To that purpose, role plays and simulations of interpreting scenarios need to be employed by trainers as key methods to develop trainees' interpreting and discourse management skills, in which they are sensitive to the purpose of the interaction and the constraints of a particular communicative context. The pedagogical focus on contextualized decision-making is particularly important as it enables trainees to prepare themselves for real-life practice, and "it is essential that they learn about the complexities of the role they will be playing when they embark on their careers" (Mikkelsen 2008: 91). Not only is contextualized training for interpreting trainees necessary, but also for clients. In practice, their conflicting role expectations may pose a dilemma for the BLI and affect their decisions in the course of interpreting. Thus, informing users and clients about the nature and constraints of the interpreter's work is considered a vital task for individual practitioners as well as their professional associations.

On the basis of data collected from a questionnaire survey and interpreting sample grading, this paper has suggested some tentative answers to the issues of user expectations and interpreters' perceptions of the BLI's role. To consolidate the current findings, our follow-up research will make use of audio and video materials to explore further how these perceptions and conflicting role expectations play out in business settings and what implications they hold for business proceedings.

**Notes:**

1. In a chart offered by Stanislav (1997) as part of his classification of various interpreting practices, liaison interpreting is classified as an interpreting activity beyond the scope of conference interpreting, which features the communicative events where two or more interlocutors do not share a language and where the interpreter must be present and perform interpreting in both language directions (Gentile *et al.* 1996: 17).

2. International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) is regarded as the main interlocutor of the conference interpreting profession in the world, and its Code has huge impact in and outside of North America, Europe and Australia. Accessed on 6 Dec 2015, <http://aiic.net/page/6724/code-of-professional-ethics/lang/1>

3. Such as the Code of Ethics by California Healthcare Interpreters Association in the USA (<http://chia.ws>); or the National Register of Public Service Interpreter Code in the UK ([www.nrpsi.co.uk](http://www.nrpsi.co.uk)).

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## **Appendix: A self-evaluation questionnaire for business liaison interpreters**

This questionnaire is part of an empirical study on the role of liaison interpreters. It was designed to examine how business liaison interpreters position his/her own role in the communicative events. We'd like to remind you that "liaison interpreting", also known as "dialogue interpreting" or "escort interpreting", differs from the concept of "conference interpreting", as the practitioners generally conduct two-way translation in a three-cornered dialogue, which is usually less formal and involves fewer participants. Please answer the following questions truthfully and completely. Thank you very much for your response. Your opinions are very much appreciated, and your personal information will be kept in confidential.

### **Part I. Personal information (Please underline your choices):**

1. **Gender:** Male      Female
2. **Age:** Under 25      26-35      36-45      over 46
3. **Education:** high school graduate, undergraduate, postgraduate (MA), postgraduate (PhD)
4. **Where do you work/study?**  
school                                  translation agency                                  company  
government department                  NGO                                  free-lance                                  others
5. **What are you usually engaged in?**  
conference interpreting                  liaison interpreting                                  both                                  others
6. **Where do you usually conduct interpreting? (multiple selections allowed)**  
companies                                  government departments                                  media                                  hospitals  
courts                                  schools                                  communities                                  tourist attractions                                  Others
7. **Have you ever received professional training (courses, workshops, etc.)?**  
Yes    No
8. **If yes, what type of training?**  
BA in English                                  BA in T&I                                  MA in T&I                                  PhD in T&I  
training courses                                  workshops                                  others
9. **How long have you been engaged in interpreting?**  
less than 1 year                                  1-2 years                                  3-4 years  
5-9 years                                  10-20 years                                  over 20 years

### **Part II. Close-ended questions (Please answer the questions according to your own experience and understanding):**

1. Which of the following descriptors best portrays the role of BLI?  
(1) an invisible agent                                  (2) the leading role of the dialogue  
(3) a serving agent                                  (4) the gate-keeper                                  (5) the mediator
2. Do you take the initiative to contact both sides after you take an interpreting commission?  
(1) I would contact my employer and follow his/her instructions.  
(2) I'd wait for the employer to provide some information. If he/she does not provide anything, it's not a big deal.  
(3) I'd try to contact both parties so as to get relevant information.

- (4) I'd keep urging both parties to provide all information I need, so as to ensure my best performance.
- (5) I'd communicate with the employer and help him understand the interpreters' workflow if necessary.

3. What do you think is the interpreter's main function in the process of business liaison interpreting?

- (1) To help the parties achieve their intention of communication.
- (2) To provide the most expected and acceptable translation to the interlocutors.
- (3) To express the interlocutors' intention faithfully and completely.
- (4) To safeguard the interest of my employer.
- (5) To successfully bring the best out of me and show my talents.

4. How do you think of "faithfulness" in business liaison interpreting?

- (1) There is no need to bother with the so-called "faithfulness". Interpreters are encouraged to exert their own subjectivity.
- (2) "Faithfulness" means trying not to make any changes to the message of the interlocutors.
- (3) What matters is to provide efficient services for my employer and stay with his/her side.
- (4) We need to be faithful to the interpreting profession, and live up to the social norms and expectations.
- (5) The ultimate goal of "faithfulness" is to serve the communicative intention.

5. How do you think of "neutrality" in business liaison interpreting?

- (1) It means to remain objective and neutral without any bias or emotional involvement.
- (2) To be neutral as possible, but sometimes I can't help being emotionally biased towards the party more in line with social norms.
- (3) To be as neutral as possible, but sometimes I'm emotionally biased towards the party whose behaviour is more consistent with the intention of the communication.
- (4) Truthfully I can't stay neutral and am emotionally attracted by the party who shares the same view with me.
- (5) I would say it's not possible to stay absolute neutral, as I emotionally favor my employer.

6. What personal pronouns do you usually use in your interpretation?

- (1) The first person (i.e. "I" as the speaker).
- (2) The third person (like "she said", "he just said").
- (3) I use the same person name as the employer ("I" or "we" referring to the employer, "he" or "they" referring to the other party).
- (4) I use various personal names flexibly according to circumstances.

7. What do you do if there is an awkward silence during a communication event?

- (1) I would stay detached and wait for one of the parties to break the ice.
- (2) I would talk about something that I'm really good at so as to impress them.
- (3) I would take the initiative and introduce a topic that may interest both parties.

- (4) I'd greet the guest on behalf of my employer.
- (5) Wait, but stay watchful.

8. What do you do if there's too long a monologue from one side? Do you interrupt him/her?

- (1) There is no way that I would ever interrupt the interlocutors.
- (2) I would politely interrupt him/her, as I'd take the listener's feeling into consideration.
- (3) I'd definitely interrupt him/her, as I would guarantee my best performance.
- (4) I would not interrupt my employer, but may do so with the other side.
- (5) I'd use some body language (nodding for instance) so that the other party would have a chance to speak.

9. If there are more than one person speaking at the same time, do you regulate the turn-taking?

- (1) No, I would wait for them to adjust the turn-taking. If no one makes concessions, I would just switch the languages quickly.
- (2) Yes, I would give the floor to the guests to show respect.
- (3) Yes, I would specify who is to speak next.
- (4) Yes, I would gesture one of them to speak first based on my judgement of the factors such as age, gender, status, number of speaking turns.
- (5) Yes, I would let the employer speak first.

10. If one or both of the parties are upset or excited, do you try to ease the tension?

- (1) I would not. They could calm themselves down.
- (2) I would try to comfort the employer, but not the other party.
- (3) I would try to ease the tension by comforting both sides.
- (4) I would ask them to sit down and listen to me.

11. During the process of interpreting, would you take the initiative to explain the cultural differences if you foresee some potential cultural conflicts?

- (1) Generally no, interpreting is nothing but a cross-language task.
- (2) Generally yes. Cross-cultural communication is part of an interpreting task.
- (3) Yes if it's in the interest of my employer; if it's in the interest of the other party, I would give the explanation only under his/her request.
- (4) Of course I would. It's a great opportunity to show my skills and advantages.
- (5) Yes. I would deliver a faithful translation before adding some explanations.

12. If one side uses swear words and asks you to faithfully convey these, would you do so?

- (1) I would convey the message, and use the same tone.
- (2) I would convey the message, but have it downtoned.
- (3) No, it would only get things worse.
- (4) No, it would jeopardise my professional image.
- (5) It depends. I would make my own choices judging from the employer's interest.

13. If the parties take you as a scapegoat, can you accept it?

- (1) Yeah whatever, I've done my job.
- (2) It would be acceptable if it were the employer; but no way with the other party.
- (3) No, I would politely defend myself.
- (4) Never, I would argue with them, and ask them to apologize.
- (5) I may accept it on the spot considering the overall situation, but would clarify it afterwards.

14. Would you make intervention if the conversation falls into a deadlock or is on the verge of breaking down?

- (1) Of course! I would actively take the role of coordinator, and make all the arrangement which I think necessary.
- (2) No, I cannot cross the boundary. So I would wait until they figure out the dispute by themselves.
- (3) Would try to bring a pause to the deadlock by suggesting a tea break for instance, so that the parties would have time to calm themselves down.
- (4) Would make some intervention from the interest of my employer.
- (5) Would decide whether to intervene or not according to the applicable social customs and rules.

15. What do you do if one of the speakers asks for your opinion during the communication?

- (1) No personal suggestions would be given to any party.
- (2) Yes to the employer, no to the other party.
- (3) If necessary, I would make personal recommendations to the parties according to my own judgment.
- (4) I love nothing better than this kind of opportunities. I'd say whatever is in my mind.
- (5) I might say a few words, but with reservations.

16. Do you volunteer to talk with the speakers during the break?

- (1) Only with my employer.
- (2) I would, with the party that I like.
- (3) I would talk with them in turn.
- (4) Yes, usually with the guest party.
- (5) No, with neither of them.

17. What is an ideal interpreter in your mind?

- (1) An invisible outsider.
- (2) A guy always in the center of communication.
- (3) An efficient and loyal service staff, safeguarding the interest of the employer.
- (4) One who is well-placed, in line with social norms and public expectations.
- (5) An active participate in communication activities, who contributes to the realization of the communication purposes.

**Part III. Interpreting samples (Please score each of the translation versions and explain the reasons of your scoring):**

There are two interpreting samples, each with five versions embodying the four translation ethics and non-ethics. They are omitted due to the limited space, but you are more than welcome if you'd like to discuss about it with us.